



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

DIHA

January 13, 1977

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TO: The Deputy Secretary
THROUGH: S/P - Anthony Lake
FROM: S/P - Richard E. Feinberg *RF*

Human Rights in the Southern Cone
of Latin America

SUMMARY

My observations made during the swing through the southern cone of Latin America with Ambassador Todman suggest that our human rights policies can improve practices in Chile, Uruguay and possibly Argentina -- but improvements will come slowly and will require constant pressure from the US. The overwhelming desire of the governments of Chile and Uruguay to return to our good graces gives us significant influence. However, these regimes have a long way to go on human rights, so our responses must be measured. While we should react positively to real improvements, our oral statements should be cautious and qualified and our few concrete chips -- aid, military assistance, OPIC guarantees -- should be held in reserve until really significant steps have been taken.

DISCUSSION

The military governments in Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay remain serious violators of the rights of the person, and political rights are severely restrained. In Chile, the sharp drop in the number of "disappearances" has reduced, somewhat, the climate of fear.

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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Uruguay remains a closed society. In Argentina, now that the guerrillas are largely liquidated, the possibility exists for a reduction in the worse abuses.

Various factors suggest that continued US pressure can result in improved human rights practices in each case (Our leverage is greatest in Chile and Uruguay, but is less in wealthier Argentina with its historical orientation toward Europe and tradition of strained relations with the US):

-- The conservative military and civilian groups that now rule Chile and Uruguay have traditionally looked to the US for leadership. Their psychological dependence on us is overwhelming and they very much want to please. (The Commander-in-Chief of the Uruguayan Army went so far as to say to us that, so great was Uruguayan admiration for the US that, "Had the US gone Communist, Uruguay would have followed".);

-- The three governments' fundamental anti-communism makes turning to the Soviets almost unthinkable, and even non-alignment unsavory;

-- ~~Cut-offs of US security assistance is producing a shortage of spare parts that has grounded a substantial portion of the Argentine Air Force, and Uruguay lacks ammunition for its M-1 rifles. Limited arms sales may, therefore, be increasingly effective levers on human rights and should be used in this way;~~

-- Our conversations, combined with those of Pat Derian in Argentina, contributed to the understanding of all three governments that our human rights concerns are fundamental and permanent.

Furthermore, the internal dynamics in each country suggest the possibility that the human rights situation may improve:

-- The "give" on the part of all three governments should be increasing as the real (although not always the perceived) threat from terrorism declines;

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-- Forces of moderation are detectable within each regime;

-- ~~While severely weakened by past repression,~~
~~centrist and other civilian forces enthusiastically~~
~~share our human rights principles.~~

Earlier concern that our human rights policies could produce a nationalist reaction that would foist extremist elements into power now appears unfounded. The Embassy in Argentina believes that the extreme right within the armed forces will not be able to unseat President Videla. In Chile, the moderates in the military have been exerting increasing pressure on Pinochet and in Uruguay the emerging figure -- Gregorio Alvarez -- is considered relatively enlightened.

In Chile, an internal army document approved by the generals recently urged Pinochet toward reforms, warning that the OAS meeting in Grenada demonstrated that governments that remain antagonistic toward the human rights policies of the US are losing out and that, for Chile, improved relations with the US is an absolute necessity. Apparently encouraged by our visit, various Christian Democratic labor leaders with whom we met in Santiago have issued a declaration calling for a restoration of union rights and democratic freedoms. These examples illustrate how external and internal forces can reinforce each other to bring pressure to bear on a government.

Liberalization will, however, come slowly to the southern cone. Even though the threat from terrorism was defeated in Uruguay by the end of 1972, and the left in Chile was unable to mount an armed resistance after the 1973 coup, the military rulers remain fixated upon what, to them, were the traumatic events of the early 1970's. They are determined to prevent renewed political instability. Indeed, their tendency to label as "subversive" any dissident behavior contains the seeds of possible regressions in human rights

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performance -- whether on the rights of the person or broader political liberties -- should events appear to be getting beyond the military's control. Pinochet has announced elections for 1985, and the Uruguayan government has promised elections -- albeit with only one agreed candidate running -- for 1981. Even these dates are conditioned upon an "acceptable" political climate.

CONCLUSION

~~The US may have to dig in for a continuing period of strained relations with the military governments of Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. Their human rights practices are unlikely to show dramatic improvement in the short run, and whatever reforms they do undertake will be small compared to the overall picture of repression.~~

~~In our human rights policy, we face the conceptual problem of wanting to reward improvements even when the overall picture in a country still remains bleak. The solution is to respond positively to improvements -- but not so effusively as to give the impression of being satisfied. For example, a reduction in the use of torture may warrant a general statement that the US considers that country's human rights practices to have shown some improvement -- but would not in itself warrant the greater approval implied by the resumption of military aid or a positive vote in the IFIs. Our general leverage in the southern cone is substantial but our instruments are relatively few and they must be used cautiously. Resumption of fully normal and friendly relations will be a slow arduous process, but if we hold to the course, the results for our human rights policy could be resounding.~~

cc: ARA/LA - Amb. Todman
D/HA - Miss Derian

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